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ABSTRACT

To the explorer or colonist of the 16th and 17th centuries, North America was a vast and uncharted land. The continent appealed to European eyes--blind to the claims of the Native Americans who, to varying degrees of density, inhabited the entire continent--as an open field to claim, to exploit, and to settle. Once permanent settlements were established, early colonists lived in a culturally diverse society where interaction with different groups was key to survival and growth. This book provides hundreds of firsthand accounts of the period from diary entries, letters, speeches, and newspaper articles that illustrate how historical events appeared to those who lived during them. Among the eyewitness testimonies are those of John Smith, John Winthrop, Anne Bradstreet, William Penn, Cotton Mather, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Phillis Wheatley, Thomas Paine, Abigail Adams, and Thomas Jefferson. Each chapter provides an introductory essay and a chronology of events. The book also includes critical documents such as the first English colonial charter, the Mayflower Compact, the Treaty of Paris, the Declaration of Independence, as well as capsule biographies of key figures; (n=235+) a bibliography; an index; eight maps; a glossary; and photographs (n=80+). (BT)

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